

CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

WALTER M. DICKIE, M.D., Director

Weekly Bulletin



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GUY P. JONES
EDITOR

Spider Poisoning Cases Reported

A number of cases of spider poisoning, caused by the bite of the so-called "black widow" spider, have been reported in California this summer. Several of them have resulted fatally. This spider, which is found in the lower half of the United States, from coast to coast, is probably the only poisonous spider in this country. Its scientific name is *Latrodectus mactans* and among its nicknames are the "black widow," the "shoe button" spider and the "hour-glass" spider. It obtains the name "black widow" from its custom of eating its mate. Its shiny, black, round abdomen gives rise to the name of "shoe button" and a bright red patch, shaped somewhat like an hour glass, on the under side of the abdomen is responsible for the "hour glass" designation.

This spider builds its web, coarse and irregular in shape, in dimly lighted places, where it is not liable to be disturbed. It is occasionally found under stones and pieces of wood, but is more often located in corners, rafters and under the floors of sheds, out-buildings, barns and similar buildings.

The female spider is always responsible for bites in all reported cases. Her body is often half an inch in length and the long, shiny, black legs may stretch over a spread of as much as two inches. The body is brilliantly marked with red or yellow, or both. The markings vary greatly, but the hour-glass design is most constant.

After the sharp, stinging bite, acute pain develops in the region of the surface bitten, spreading to other

parts of the body. In addition to the pain, there is generally writhing, muscle contraction, difficult breathing, cold perspiration, spasms, nausea and an extreme rigidity of the abdomen. Throughout a long convalescence there remains general weakness, numbness and pain. Medical treatment involves relief from pain, elimination of the poison and stimulations. In fatal cases death generally occurs in from fourteen to thirty-two hours. A convalescent blood serum, taken from individuals who have recovered from bites of this spider, has been used successfully in the treatment of acute cases.

EXAMINATION OF ENTERING SCHOOL CHILDREN

The annual summer round-up of children who will enter school for the first time was completed during the summer months. Nearly 8000 children were given physical examinations under the auspices of the Bureau of Child Hygiene of the State Department of Public Health and the California Congress of Parents and Teachers. These examinations were made in 38 different counties of the state. Recommendations were made for the correction of physical defects that were discovered by the examining physicians. The removal of such defects is of vital importance, not only to the health and education of the individual children, but it is also of value in the conservation of school moneys, for school appropriations are based upon average daily attendance.

INCREASE IN BIRTHS

During the first six months of 1930, births in California increased 4.5 per cent over the first six months of 1929. This is an actual increase of 1779 births. During the first six months of 1929, a total of 39,947 births were registered in California and during the first six months of 1930, 41,726 births were recorded. Increases in births occurred among people of all races in California, with the exception of the Chinese and Japanese. The most conspicuous increase occurred among Mexicans. A total of 7502 Mexican births were registered during the first six months of 1930, as against 6959 such births registered during the first six months of 1929. The percentage of Mexican births to the total births in 1930 is 18.0 as compared with a percentage of 17.4 for the first six months of 1929. Japanese births fell from a total of 1282 registered during the first six months of 1929 to 1150 registered during the first six months of 1930. The greatest number of births registered during any one month of the present year was 7351, which was in the month of January.

Among the counties which show the most conspicuous increases in number of births which occurred during the present year are Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Santa Barbara and Tulare. Among the cities in which conspicuous increases are noted, the following may be mentioned: Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Pasadena, Pomona, Glendale, Whittier, Riverside, San Francisco, Stockton, San Mateo and Santa Barbara.

FOOD POISONING FROM CREAM CUSTARD PRODUCTS

During the present summer, a large number of cases of food poisoning have been reported in various localities of California. Some of these cases have been traced to contaminated cream custard products sold over bakery counters. One group of such cases involved 62 individuals residing in small cities and rural districts immediately adjacent to the city where the cream pies were manufactured. An investigation by the State Department of Public Health revealed the fact that the cream custard used in this food product became contaminated. Acute gastrointestinal symptoms occurred among individuals who ate of this product. No deaths were reported but the patients were all taken suddenly ill with abdominal cramps, extreme nausea, headache and prostration. During extremely warm weather it is difficult to prevent the accidental contamination of cream custard, as this product makes an ideal medium for the growth of bacteria.

EPIDEMIC POLIOMYELITIS LESS PREVALENT

The epidemic of acute anterior poliomyelitis which has prevailed during the present summer is now subsiding rapidly. Since the middle of July, when the disease reached peak in its prevalence, the number of cases reported has decreased by 47 per cent. There were but 52 cases reported during the week ending August 16th. Since the beginning of the year, a total of 880 cases of the disease have occurred in California. Of these, 785 were reported from the eight counties of Southern California. The remaining 95 cases were reported from 22 other counties of the state. No cases of poliomyelitis have been reported this year from 28 counties of California. Any further rise in the prevalence of the disease this year is unlooked for and it now appears that the number of reported cases will continue to diminish each week.

Information relative to the number of deaths that may have occurred and the number of cases in which there are resultant paralyses is not available at the present time. It would appear, however, that relatively few deaths have occurred and relatively few cases of paralysis have been left in the wake of the epidemic.

PLAN DEMONSTRATIONS IN PROPER POSTURE

Poor posture is one of the common defects encountered by physicians who make physical examinations of children. This defect is a factor in ill health and the Bureau of Child Hygiene of the State Department of Public Health is now undertaking a special line of work for the purpose of developing proper posture in young California children. The development of proper posture is largely a matter of muscle training and steps are now being taken for carrying on an extensive piece of work by means of physiotherapists who will give demonstrations in exercises specially designed for muscle training.

BRAWLEY WANTS FILTRATION PLANT

A bond issue to provide for the installation of a modern filtration plant is before the residents of Brawley, in Imperial County. With the completion of this project all of the large towns in the Imperial Valley will have been provided with water filtration.

The names of the prime movers of science disappear gradually in a general fusion, and the more a science advances, the more impersonal and detached it becomes.—*Claude Bernard*.

POPULATION AND DEATH RATES

The remarkable increase in the population of California as revealed in figures released by the U. S. Bureau of the Census is an important factor in lowering the death rates for the various causes of death. Standard mortality rates are based upon the numbers of deaths that occur in every 100,000 of the population. Estimates of population at mid-year are based upon the rate of increase during the ten years that intervene between the 1920 and 1930 census. Since the state grew from 3,426,000 in 1920 to 5,672,000 in 1930, the estimates of population during the intervening years are made much higher. Instead of having a typhoid fever death rate of 2.3 per 100,000 population, as under the old estimate of population, at mid-year, the typhoid fever death rate for 1929 was 1.7 per 100,000 population, as based upon the computed increase. With tuberculosis, instead of a mortality rate of 139 per 100,000 population, the new computations give the state a rate of 106.3 per 100,000 population for this disease. Similar figures give California added prestige in the accomplishments that have been made in the control of the various communicable diseases. The new mortality rates as based on the new estimates of population, now available, place California in the van as one of the most healthful states in the Union.

CAPITOLA INSTALLS SEWER SYSTEM

Under the provisions of the County Sanitation District, the communities of Capitola and Soquel, in Santa Cruz County, are installing an extensive sewer system with the extension of an existing outfall sewer to approximately 30 times its present length. The sewer serves the bulk of the population in the district. The county board of supervisors is instrumental in developing the project. This is the first instance in which the County Sanitation District Act has been employed outside of Los Angeles County.

Westmoreland Sanitary District in Los Angeles County has just voted bonds for the construction of a complete sewer system. Because of the fact that the population of this community is scattered, the undertaking represents an enterprise of considerable magnitude.

Life is good when good use is made of it.—*Ernest Renan.*

Short is the life of those who possess great accomplishments, and seldom do they reach a good old age.—*Martial.*

CONDEMNATION OF OFF-GRADE WALNUT MEATS

During the season 1929-1930, a total of 1,594,263 pounds of off-grade walnut meats were condemned by the Bureau of Food and Drugs. These products were sent to oil mills, where they were converted into edible oil products. Inspectors of the Bureau of Food and Drugs visited nut-cracking establishments, wholesale candy factories and wholesale bakeries, as well as cold-storage plants. The off-grade products, which consist of walnut meats that were mouldy, rancid or infested with worms, were placed in sacks and quarantined. The removal of these faulty products from the market and their conversion into products suitable for human consumption is of benefit to the consuming public. The United States Department of Agriculture and the State Department of Agriculture cooperated with the State Department of Public Health in making this survey.

EGG INSPECTION

During the past nine months, nearly 800 egg inspections have been made and only 60 violations of the Egg Law were encountered. Most of these violations were more or less technical and the dealers who were at fault received instructions. Promises to properly label eggs were exacted. The violations consisted, in the main, of labeling medium size eggs, or pullets, as "eggs." The term "eggs" alone indicates, under the law, large eggs which weigh at least 24 ounces per dozen. Upwards of 50 prosecutions of individuals who violated the Egg Law were conducted. These prosecutions were of individuals who did not obey the instructions of inspectors.

Every medical student should remember that his end is not to be made a chemist, or a physiologist, or an anatomist, but to learn how to recognize and treat disease, to become a practical physician.—*Sir William Osler.*

MORBIDITY *

Diphtheria.

42 cases of diphtheria have been reported, as follows: Berkeley 1, Butte County 2, Colusa County 1, Fresno County 1, Corcoran 1, Los Angeles County 4, Azusa 1, Glendale 1, Long Beach 1, Los Angeles 13, Redondo 1, Torrance 1, Monterey County 2, Monterey 1, Santa Ana 3, Riverside 1, Modesto 1, Sutter County 3, Porterville 2, Ventura 1.

Scarlet Fever.

27 cases of scarlet fever have been reported, as follows: Berkeley 1, Oakland 2, Glendale 3, Long Beach 1, Los Angeles 6, Orange County 2, Sacramento County 2, Hollister 1, Ontario

* From reports received on August 18th and 19th for week ending August 16th.

1. San Francisco 5, Santa Cruz County 1, Modesto 1, Yolo County 1.

Measles.

85 cases of measles have been reported, as follows: Alameda 1, Berkeley 2, Hayward 1, Oakland 2, Pittsburg 1, Fresno County 3, Inyo County 1, Los Angeles County 2, Alhambra 2, Glendora 3, La Verne 11, Los Angeles 6, Santa Monica 3, Maywood 4, Monterey 2, Orange County 1, Fullerton 1, Santa Ana 1, Riverside County 1, Riverside 1, Sacramento County 1, Sacramento 1, San Diego County 5, National City 2, San Diego 20, San Francisco 1, Tracy 2, Santa Maria 1, Santa Rosa 3.

Smallpox.

5 cases of smallpox have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles 1, Napa 1, Roseville 1, North Sacramento 1, Vallejo 1.

Typhoid Fever.

18 cases of typhoid fever have been reported, as follows: Brawley 1, Inyo County 3, Hanford 1, Los Angeles County 1, Los Angeles 4, Upland 1, Chula Vista 1, San Francisco 1, San Joaquin County 1, Santa Clara County 1, California 3.**

Whooping Cough.

77 cases of whooping cough have been reported, as follows: Alameda 1, Berkeley 8, Oakland 5, Fresno County 3, Glenn County 1, Los Angeles County 3, Glendora 2, Los Angeles 20, Monterey County 1, Orange County 6, Tustin 2, Coronado 1,

San Diego 5, San Francisco 2, San Luis Obispo County 2, Santa Barbara County 10, San Jose 2, Tulare County 3.

Meningitis (Epidemic).

3 cases of epidemic meningitis have been reported, as follows: Oakland 1, Los Angeles County 1, Los Angeles 1.

Anthrax.

Bakersfield reported one case of anthrax.

Encephalitis (Epidemic)

2 cases of epidemic encephalitis have been reported, as follows: San Francisco 1, San Luis Obispo 1.

Food Poisoning.

31 cases of food poisoning have been reported, as follows: Los Angeles County 30, Long Beach 1.

Poliomyelitis.

51 cases of poliomyelitis have been reported, as follows: Brawley 1, Los Angeles County 4, Claremont 1, Glendora 1, Hermosa 2, Inglewood 1, Long Beach 4, Los Angeles 18, Manhattan 1, San Fernando 1, Santa Monica 1, Hawthorne 1, Madera County 1, Orange County 1, Santa Ana 1, Riverside County 3, Riverside 1, Ontario 2, San Diego 1, San Francisco 1, Lodi 1, Santa Clara County 1, Watsonville 1, California 1.**

** Cases charged to "California represent patients ill before entering the state or those who contracted their illness traveling about the state throughout the incubation period of the disease. These cases are not chargeable to any one locality.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTS

Disease	1930				1929			
	Week ending			Reports for week ending Aug. 16 received by Aug. 19	Week ending			Reports for week ending Aug. 17 received by Aug. 20
	July 26	Aug. 2	Aug. 9		July 27	Aug. 3	Aug. 10	
Actinomycosis	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Anthrax	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
Chickenpox	59	28	30	26	65	55	42	43
Coccidioidal Granuloma	2	2	1	0	3	1	0	0
Dengue	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Diphtheria	29	39	40	42	33	49	31	38
Dysentery (Amoebic)	1	0	2	0	0	3	1	0
Dysentery (Bacillary)	1	2	7	1	0	8	556	1
Encephalitis (Epidemic)	0	0	1	2	1	6	1	0
Erysipelas	13	10	15	6	12	15	8	7
Food Poisoning	34	27	3	31	1	20	0	20
German Measles	4	5	7	2	4	5	5	3
Gonococcus Infection	136	97	187	145	93	116	93	93
Hookworm	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Influenza	11	10	6	0	7	14	8	9
Jaundice (Epidemic)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Leprosy	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Malaria	5	10	3	1	3	6	5	1
Measles	238	162	92	85	57	35	18	28
Meningitis (Epidemic)	5	5	2	3	16	9	5	9
Mumps	105	82	72	100	109	132	98	110
Ophthalmia Neonatorum	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Paratyphoid Fever	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	60
Pellagra	2	4	2	2	0	2	0	2
Pneumonia (Lobar)	21	25	18	18	23	71	24	23
Poliomyelitis	86	76	60	51	4	2	3	7
Rabies (Human)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Rabies (Animal)	18	8	12	5	7	17	9	7
Scarlet Fever	49	29	37	27	108	70	76	57
Smallpox	8	2	17	5	28	13	23	13
Syphilis	200	154	188	145	139	266	120	89
Tetanus	2	1	2	0	3	2	2	2
Trachoma	1	4	1	1	1	1	2	0
Trichinosis	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Tuberculosis	188	191	204	161	221	210	188	152
Tularemia	0	1	2	0	2	0	0	1
Typhoid Fever	34	31	26	18	27	35	18	24
Typhus Fever	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Undulant Fever	0	3	2	0	3	1	0	2
Whooping Cough	151	108	116	77	176	173	154	116
Totals	1,406	1,138	1,164	956	1,146	1,342	1,491	918

Epidemic poliomyelitis dropped 15 per cent in prevalence last week.

Whooping cough is much less prevalent.

Cases of food poisoning are reported frequently.

Chickenpox and measles are at low levels.